

TALKING POINTS

NIOSH Current Intelligence Bulletin on ETS

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has issued a Current Intelligence Bulletin (CIB) on ETS in the workplace which concludes ETS is "a potential occupational carcinogen" and which recommends "exposures be reduced to the lowest feasible concentration."

The CIB suggests that "exposure to ETS is most efficiently and completely controlled by simply eliminating tobacco use from the workplace." Short of a smoking ban, the CIB recommends separate ventilation for smoking areas.

Responses:

- Of the studies on ETS that examine workplace smoking exposure, only one reports a significant association -- ten report no such statistically significant association.
- The authors of the one workplace study to report a statistically significant association suggested that the association was weak and did not seem to fall in line with the other conclusions of the study.
- The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently argued that the data on workplace exposure is scant, and is insufficient to support an emergency standard.
- Several credible scientific papers, including research undertaken by the American Health Foundation, have reported that workplace exposure to ETS is far lower than that found in the home. The CIB does not even mention this data.
- The vast majority of the spousal smoking studies do not report a statistically significant increase in lung cancer risk for nonsmokers married to smokers. Only six of the 30 published studies (the CIB discusses 21 of these) report a statistically significant association from spousal ETS exposure. None of the studies conducted in the U.S. reported a statistically significant increase in risk.
- The claim that exposure to ETS is a cause of increased risk of cardiovascular disease in nonsmokers is not convincingly supported by scientific data.
- By treating ETS separately, NIOSH ignores its own reporting that ETS is responsible for only 2 percent of indoor air quality complaints in sick buildings.
- The solution isn't to ban smoking or to misrepresent the scientific foundation for smoking bans. The solutions are to ventilate properly to remove and/or dilute all indoor air constituents.

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